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**Submitted to the Judiciary Committee
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Good morning Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning:

House Bill No. 5417, AAC Juvenile Justice and Services and Firearms Background Checks;
House Bill No. 5418, AA Revising Juvenile and Criminal Justice Statutes and Insurance Statutes Concerning Theft of a Motor Vehicle; and
Senate Bill No. 365, AAC Juvenile and Criminal Justice Reforms.

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) supports many of the efforts in these proposals that will improve the accountability of juvenile offenders and potentially deter further criminal conduct. Juvenile justice reforms, including the prompt arraignment for certain serious juvenile offenders, the use of GPS monitoring for repeat criminal conduct and improving the sharing of information concerning juvenile cases by law enforcement, will enhance victim and public safety.

Section 17 of House Bill No. 5418 requires a study on the use of victim impact panels in juvenile delinquency proceedings involving serious violent crimes. **The OVA is requesting to be included among the membership to ensure the state constitutional and statutory rights of crime victims are considered and are at the forefront of any recommendations that may result from this study.**

Any and all criminal justice reforms should serve not only public safety and the interests of the accused; but must serve those personally harmed by crime. I have attached to my testimony a policy statement concerning the potential impact of criminal justice reform efforts on crime victims' rights. This statement was developed by an alliance of all state victim' rights enforcement/compliance programs, and it encourages policymakers and stakeholders to use six questions to analyze the impact of proposals on victims of crime.

Thank you for consideration of my testimony.

Justice Reform and Crime Victims

Assessing justice reform and reinvestment strategies

January 2022

As national and state policymakers seek changes to the justice system in the service of more effective, efficient, and just outcomes, it is imperative to consider the rights and interests of victims of crime. **Criminal and juvenile justice system reform must include meaningful protection of the interests and rights of crime victims to avoid harmful, unintended consequences.**

Reform strategies should serve not only public safety and the interests of the accused; but must serve those personally harmed by crime. Policymakers and stakeholders are urged to **use the following six questions** to analyze the impact of proposed strategies on victims of crime and to guide discussions about meaningful, equitable reform that will serve the interests of all:

- Does this strategy implicate the intent and/or provision of statutory or constitutional victims' rights?
- Does this strategy coerce or compel victims to participate in programming or unwanted communication with the offender?
- Does this strategy disrupt a funding stream that supports victim services, such as conviction surcharges or assessments? If so, how will the financial support for those victim services be maintained?
- Does this strategy dilute or eliminate victims' access to meaningful notice and opportunities to participate or provide input as currently required in your state?
- Does this strategy eliminate or reduce the opportunity for victims to receive court-ordered restitution for crime-related costs? If so, how will the financial recovery of victims be supported?
- Does this strategy create uncertainty about something a victim believed was final, such as a sentence, release date, or probationary period? If so, will victims be given timely and accurate notice of changes, and will they be given an opportunity to be heard on the impact of this change?

These prompting questions emerged from discussions by an alliance of state victim rights enforcement/compliance programs and other organizations that support victims and promote victim rights. **State agencies, victim coalitions, and other stakeholders are encouraged to use and share them widely.**